

METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT MEDIA RELEASE

Chief Ronal W. Serpas

Don Aaron Public Affairs Manager (615) 862-7306 – office (615) 880-2090 – fax http://www.police.nashville.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Preparations for the 2005 edition of the Metropolitan Police Department's Christmas Basket Program are in full swing in the cafeteria of the old Tennessee State Prison in West Nashville.

Chief Ronal Serpas and Correction Commissioner George Little will be on hand in the cafeteria at 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday) to explain to media representatives how the Christmas Basket Program helps needy Nashvillians and showcase its new home.

Each year, donated warehouse space is needed weeks before Christmas so that food baskets and toys can be made ready for the hundreds of men, women and children served by the program. This year, the Tennessee Department of Correction is allowing the cafeteria at the old Tennessee State Prison to serve as Christmas Basket headquarters. The Correction Department is also donating numerous wooden toys made by inmates, including rocking horses and elaborate dollhouses, to the police-run basket operation, which is now in its 44th year.

In its inception, the program served two families. Over the years, requests for assistance and those actually helped by the program have steadily grown. Families are chosen at the recommendation of police officers who come into contact with them during the year. This year, 160 needy families with more than 400 children will receive food and toys from police officers on Christmas Eve morning. Forty needy elderly families will also be served.

Contributions from hundreds of police department personnel, both sworn and civilian, and from the Nashville community fund the program.

Media Note: To get to the old prison's cafeteria on Friday morning, travel along the right side of the prison wall until you see two large open iron gates. Drive straight ahead into the prison yard. The cafeteria building will be directly in front of you.

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